

ecstasy or be spared hours of retribution. Boredom, rather, to improve the antithesis. . .

What would their common life be? With her, as with any other woman, there would be constant sacrifices of personal choice, eternal surrender to whim, everlasting exposure to the blackmailing charge that he was causing her pain; he must expect what every man had to endure through tying himself to something irrational and capricious, it was the age-old penalty of being too weak to live independent of woman's company. And, in addition to humouring her, he must share his life with her, they must do everything in pairs. . . It took some imagination and considerable time to appreciate what that meant; he knew his own life at Ripley Court and in London and he could form a rough conception of the extent to which it would be modified if he associated a woman with it. How far the modification would prove irksome depended entirely on the woman. So far he had only lived with Lucile Welman, and those formative weeks had been made possible by the physical spell which she cast upon him, by the primitive, possessive hunger which nerved her to retain him, by her experienced arts and patiently acquired psychology. Other men had lived with her, she understood them; she could do what she liked with them so long as the insecure union lasted; she could make the union last as long as she usually wanted and longer than most women contrived. . .

That was all his knowledge of a common life, and even while it was coming to him he knew that the life was abnormal, that it was based on nothing but passion and that, within limits, he could end it when he chose. Passion was but one of a hundred things in marriage; and, when sympathy waned and common interests died, when their life ceased to be a honeymoon in paradise and became a habit in England, when the monotony of the habit was appreciated in its full horror, then he could *not* end it at will. Each of them could look forward to a further fifty years of life—and he had been rude to her that afternoon, not for the first time, because she agreed with him too readily